1: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Arabs M10

CHAPTER XL

Sickness and Disease

GENERAL

A 753

The notes below are in no way intended to be in the nature of a medical treatise.

Amongst Arabs sickness generally is put down to one of two things:

(*a*) The evil eye or witchcraft.
(*b*) The hand of God.

A book could be written on the subject of this Evil Eye and Witchcraft. Among the Shi'ah tribes of Iraq (non-Badawin) every kind of charm* (usually in the form of a paper scroll containing a verse from the Qur'an done up in leather bag) is worn by men and women against the danger. Should a person fall under the spell of another versed in witchcraft, many methods are in use for exorcising the evil spirit and freeing the patient.

Ordinary maladies are unfortunately dealt with in the crudest fashion, as will be seen below.

A 752

Bites of snakes, according to the Arab, are best dealt with by applying tourniquets, wrapping the patient in the pelt of a newly skinned goat and rubbing concoctions of herbs on the bitten spot.

A 757

Among Iraq tribes a *Sulaimaniyah* stone (cat's eye) is supposed to extract all pain and poison, if applied to a scorpion sting.

Pains in head, stomach and back are dealt with by branding; cold in the chest—by branding on the chest; children's stomach-ache—branding with a hot tent needle all over the abdomen.

B 165

There is a great deal of sickness and disease among the Badawin, mostly traceable to lack of nourishment and to poor water. Life is very hard and dangers are always present, and for both men and women the span of life is normally short.

* Badawin tribes proper, especially if mixed with Wahhabism, look upon charms as wrong.

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin MJ4

and cast away as useless encumbrances in the stern fight for life. He is the victim of his environment in that he suffers so desperately from poverty and want. His clothes hang in tatters and rags; his tent is cold in winter and hot in summer; his food is reduced nearly to the limit of bare subsistence. Most of his children die because of the unsuitable food, the hard conditions of life and the ignorance of the parents. The dirt and disorder in which he lives beggar description. Out of this soil springs one of the freest and most unconquerable spirits in the world, but even so it is impossible to believe that its finest development is attainable under such handicaps. The terrible thing is not that the condition in which he lives distresses his sensitive spirit, but precisely that it does not distress him at all. The Bedouin may claim to have conquered poverty. He stands forth uncrushed by its heaviest load, but his indomitable spirit has nevertheless paid a price, and a heavy price, for that victory.

Bedouin life, however, in spite of this terrible poverty and lack of the amenities that we are accustomed to regard as necessary even to existence, has in it many characteristics that we of the luxurious and effete West might emulate with benefit. Throughout the earth and almost throughout history, men have dreamed of equality. France ran with blood a hundred and thirty years ago because of man's search for it. Russia is red with the same struggle now. Men talk about it and dream about it wherever men see visions and dream dreams. In inland Arabia men practise it, and there is a charm in the dirty, poverty-cursed, arid desert that will be searched for in vain throughout the pampered and self-satisfied world outside. His sense of equality with all the world is the breath of life to a nomad Arab, and his spirit stands